

THE APPROACH

Every school of thought, every great religion, has, in fact, the same goal in view, which is to provide the human mind with tranquillity, stability, calm, and bliss. They are all, in a way, together at the bottom and meet again at the top. It is in between that differences and troubles lie. Political considerations and ambitions, social systems and rituals, selfish interests and rivalries, tend to separate them and create schisms and classes. Sikhism asserts that all true religions are not, in fact, opposed to each other. They are all one, if they come to accept compassion as the fountain-head of virtues and consider spiritual elevation, the forging of individual character, and the formation of a society of men-of-God, as their aim. The tenth Satguru, in *Akal Ustat*, says :

The Creator (Hindu *Karta*), the Beneficent (Muslim *Karim*), are the same. The Provider and the Merciful are the same;

ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰੀਮ ਸੋਈ ਰਾਜਕ ਰਹੀਮ ਓਈ ।

Let no one even by mistake suppose there is any difference.

ਦੂਸਰੇ ਨ ਭੇਦਿ ਕੋਈ ਭੂਲ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਮਾਨਬੋ ।

Worship the One God, who is the One Divine Guru for all.

ਏਕ ਹੀ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਿ ਸਭਹੀ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਏਕ ।

Know that His Form is One, and that He is the One Light diffused in all.

ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਜੋਤ ਜਾਨਬੋ ।

The temple and the mosque are the same; the Hindu

worship and the Mussalman prayer are the same.

ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਅੰ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ ਪੂਜਾ ਅੰ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ ।

All men are the same, it is through error they appear different.

ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੇ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ ।

Originally, all the religions come into being to provide the human mind with peace and eternal bliss. They have different approaches, but are all seeking to reach the top. Some of them are circuitous and tough and some are short and straight. Some are difficult, while some are easy to tread. Some of them are full of obstacles and labyrinths, while some pass through wilderness and jungles full of ferocious and poisonous predators. Through some, people are able somehow to pass, while in others they get lost.

Sikhism has its own approach. It steers clear of formalism, ritualism, religious hypocrisy, spiritual stunts, acrobatics, austerities, and other physical sufferings. It is a lesson in life; how to live it purposefully and successfully so that it may be 'approved' here and in the hereafter. Sikhism enjoins upon us to fulfil our duty both towards the Creator and His creation where He has been pleased to send us. This life has to be lived joyfully and cheerfully and not bewailing and repenting. Duty is confined to effort; diligent, hearty, hard and consistent effort. The result, the fruit, lies in the hands of the Omnipotent Bestower. Whatever the Bestower in His pleasure bestows, is to be accepted without grumbling. The fifth Satguru, in *Rag Todi*, says :

Whatever Thou bestoweth satiates; I wander not elsewhere.

ਜੇ ਤੂ ਦੇਹਿ ਤਹੀ ਇਹੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੈ ਆਨ ਨ ਕਤਹੁ ਧਾਵਉ ॥

We have to earn the pleasure and blessing of the Master. Our work, our efforts and our actions should be such as not only to create love for the Master in us like other *sufi* and *Bhagti Marg* people, but also the aim is that the Master may begin to like and love us. In *Jap*, Guru Nanak says :

What should I say and how should I act so that He may start loving me

ਮੁਹੋ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੁਣਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥

If our actions are 'approved', the Grace of the Master will liberate us. The stress is significantly more on righteous living than on theoretical discussions. The Satguru says :

Truth is great; but greater still is truthful living.

ਸਚਹੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥ (*Sri Rag M. 1*)

In this way we come to a sort of *Dharam Chakkar*. If our actions are good, we please the Lord, and when He is pleased, we meet the Guru. When we meet the Guru, his touch generates the inherent godly virtues and values in us and our actions become good and get 'approved'. So this circle goes on as an escalator. But this we have to catch and step upon, wherever we can, to go up. The easiest way is, therefore, to run to the Guru and cling to his Lotus Feet :

Rush to the refuge of the Guru.

ਗੁਰ ਸਰਣਾਈ ਭਜਿ ਪਏ

When we have got hold of the Guru's Feet, he will, no doubt, try to disentangle his Feet from our grasp. But the Guru is not averse to it. By this, he only wants to test our faith, our devotion and our persistent patience. If we stand and pass the test, the Guru will pervade us. It is then the Guru who functions, and we become only his instruments. When the Guru resides in us, he brings along all his forces, strength, power, treasures and high spirit (ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ). As the Guru is inseparable from God, the Supreme Being (*Akal Purkh*) also comes with him. Then both God and Guru (*Waheguru*) manifest in us. A Khalsa then becomes a *lakh* and a quarter from a single individual.

This approach being the shortest and straightest, is naturally tough and difficult. The main problem to solve in this way is the moulding of the mind to proper attitude. But this is the easiest way which takes us to *Anandpur*, the city of calm, cheerfulness, and eternal bliss.

The Base

The whole structure of Sikhism is based on the conception of the Formless Eternal Being (ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਨਿਰਗੁਣ ਸਰੂਪ ਅਕਾਲ). The conception of our God-head is that of the Formless and Timeless

Reality, Truth, that was and shall ever be. So our Guru now is also formless as the *Shabd*. Similarly, our way of worship is also formless, being solely devotional singing. The two main pillars on which the structure of Sikhism stands, are *simran* and *sewa*.

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